

Clues from the Bidding

By World Champion & Master Teacher Donna Compton

A player who opens the bidding suggests a certain number of high-card points. Usually he will hold at least twelve points (unless he has an unusually distributional hand). This knowledge is a great advantage when you play the contract. The defender who opened is a strong favorite to hold any missing honor. An opening bid of 1NT is a particularly accurate guide to the lie of the cards.

When a defender has chosen not to open the bidding, or has failed to respond to partner's opening bid in a suit, his point count is limited. As declarer you can take advantage of this knowledge when you plan the play.

When a defender has opened with a preempt, or shown a two-suiter (by bidding the Unusual Notrump or making a Michaels cue-bid), a lead of the remaining side suit will usually be a singleton. Base your play on that assumption.

A player who has advertised length in one or more suits during the auction is likely to be short in your trump suit when you end up playing the contract. With four trumps missing to the queen, you should normally finesse the other defender for the queen.

Example #1

North
♠ J 9 4 2
♥ K J 5 3
♦ 10 7 4
♣ 8 5
■
South
♠ K Q 10 8 7
♥ A 2
♦ A J 2
♣ K J 3

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

West leads the ♦8 against your spade game. You capture East's queen with the ace and lead the king of trumps. East takes with the ace, cashes the king of diamonds and leads another diamond. How will you continue?

Example #2

North
♠ Q J 6 5
♥ A J 6
♦ 9 7 3
♣ J 9 2
■
South
♠ A K 8 7 3 2
♥ K 10 3
♦ 4
♣ Q 10 4

West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

West leads the ♦A against your spade game, East following with the two. You ruff West's ♦K continuation. How will you guess the hearts?

Example #3

North
♠ J 7 3
♥ A J 5
♦ A K 7 3
♣ 8 7 4
■
South
♠ A K 10 9 6 4
♥ K 8 2
♦ J 10
♣ J 5

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♣	DBL	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

West cashes the ace and king of clubs and continues with the club queen. East throws a heart on the third round and you ruff in hand. Both defenders follow to the ace of trumps. What is the most likely layout of the trump suit? Will you finesse in trumps or play for the drop?

Example #4

North
♠ 9 7 5
♥ A Q 4
♦ Q 7 2
♣ 9 6 5 3
■
South
♠ A Q
♥ K J 9 8 6 2
♦ 8 6 3
♣ K J

West	North	East	South
		1♦	1♥
Pass	2♥	All Pass	

West leads the ♦J, North plays the ♦Q to East's ♦K. East continues with the ♦A and another diamond to West's ♦10. West exits a low heart.